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YRTC-Geneva Performance Ranks Higher

Geneva – The focus of employees at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center-Geneva on treatment has resulted in a higher ranking according to the performance-based standards of the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA), said Facility Administrator Dan Scarborough.

Following the YRTC's October report to CJCA, the organization elevated the YRTC-G's performance to the third of four levels, which is the highest ranking they've ever received, he said. The fourth level is the highest and best level of performance.

"Credit goes to the management and staff at the YRTC-Geneva for this achievement," said Children and Family Service Director Thomas Pristow. "Their high performance above the national average in 30 of 34 critical outcome measures has earned the YRTC-Geneva an important milestone in the treatment of youth."

He added that the ranking represents a culture change and adherence to nationally endorsed standards at the YRTC-G.

"Achieving a higher level is indicative of our efforts to become more treatment oriented," Pristow said. "This required not only procedural changes but a cultural change, as well."

Their most-recent improvement plan included the use of verbal de-escalation techniques instead of sending youth to their rooms for misbehaving, Scarborough said. Keeping youth in services to address their issues, rather than isolated in their rooms, is a more effective and proactive approach.

Another part of the evaluation was training employees in the differences between punishment and discipline. Meetings are held with employees and department heads openly discuss the philosophy behind each approach. "Employees have changed their responses to situations after seeing how the youth benefit as a result," Scarborough said.

Al Lick, who works with the CJCA program and coaches YRTC-G, said there is more interaction between staff and youth at the site. "That has reduced the use of confinement. We want them to reach a culture where youth interact

with other youth and staff. It's very good at Geneva," he said. Adding to that is a focus on preventing the anxiety levels of youth from escalating, which helps to keep them out of confinement.

"This ranking shows the willingness of our administrators and employees to learn new ways of handling situations that are recognized as the best practices in the field," Scarborough said. "For some employees, the standards have been a new and different approach, but they are more effective at improving the outcomes for the youth. Our goal for every youth is to prepare them to return to their homes as good, law-abiding citizens."

The most-recent results show the YRTC-G is well under the nationwide averages for the use of physical and mechanical restraints, assaults on staff and youth, and instances of room confinement and time in room confinement, he said.

"Our purpose in striving for a higher recognition is to improve the treatment of our youth, and not just to win awards," he said. "Our motivation is to help the youth get better."

CJCA says performance-based standards is a data-driven improvement model grounded in research that holds juvenile justice agencies, facilities and residential care providers to the highest standards for operations, programs and services.